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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0451
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0280
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0944
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 1132
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0641
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0304
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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8289
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2012
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 DHAKA 000131

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

USDA FOR DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY/ETERPSTRA
USDA FOR OFSO/JDEVER
USDA FOR FAS/OA/MYOST/WKMILLER
USDA FOR FAS/OCRA/CALEXANDER/JCARVER
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/CHAMILTON
USDA FOR APHIS/MFLEMINGS/TBURLESON
SEOUL FOR APHIS/GEORGE ANDY BALL
DEPT FOR SA/INS, EB/TPP
BANGKOK FOR USAID
NEW DELHI FOR FAS

E.O. 12356: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [IN](#) [WTO](#) [CASC](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA SITREP - BANGLADESH

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REFTEL: DHAKA 00091

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Since the beginning of January, avian influenza outbreaks among poultry in Bangladesh have spread to an additional 9 districts, for a new total of 29 districts affected (out of 64). No cases of human infection have been reported, and an active surveillance system of 12 hospitals is currently operational. The Government of Bangladesh is conducting culling and cordon operations according to its response plan. However, the scale and pace of the current AI outbreaks across Bangladesh during the present cold season suggests that the AI virus may now be endemic in the country.
END SUMMARY.

Management Challenge

¶2. (SBU) The Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock is responsible for the animal health response to the avian influenza virus. (reftel) The official plan states that the response to a confirmed H5 presence is culling and disinfection within a 1 KM radius of the infected farm, and restricted movement on chickens within a 10 KM radius of the infected farm. Since no independent observers have been permitted to witness culling operations to date, we are unable to confirm that past responses have been conducted consistently according to the stated plan. Some sources report that in light of the current outbreak, the GOB is now more intensively conducting culling within the 1KM radius; we have anecdotal evidence prior culling efforts were not thorough. (COMMENT: Given the high density of people and poultry stocks in Bangladesh, the fact that most poultry is held in small backyard farms, and the extreme poverty of most rural dwellers, it is very likely that the smallest - and least bio-safe -- household stocks are not consistently culled. In addition, given that rural traffic and trade can occur

on small paths or across fields, there is no way to verify the effectiveness of the GOB's cordoning operations. END COMMENT.)

¶13. (SBU) Corresponding with the current outbreak, we have noted a notable increase in AI-related public outreach by the Government of Bangladesh. On January 26, Mr. Manik Lal Samaddar, the newly appointed Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser responsible for the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, visited the city of Rajshahi and met with a group of AI stakeholders to emphasize the GOB's compensation plan and to explain the overall response effort. In Dhaka, GOB officials have met with poultry traders to conduct outreach on AI. The Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries has conducted press outreach, including a confirmation that tests conducted on samples from a die-off of over 150 crows in southern Bangladesh were positive for the H5 virus.

Human Monitoring Operational

¶14. (SBU) Human influenza sentinel surveillance is currently operational in 12 hospitals across Bangladesh in a collaborative project between ICDDR,B (a research hospital supported in part by the Centers for Disease Control) and the Government of Bangladesh. A total of 823 samples have been tested from people presenting symptoms of influenza from May to December 2007. The surveillance system has confirmed 126 cases of influenza: 45 cases were influenza A; 71 cases were influenza B. All influenza A cases were tested and found negative for H5. Current surveillance is ongoing, and starting next month there will be an increased volume of sampling from patients manifesting severe respiratory symptoms.

¶15. (SBU) According to our CDC colleague here in Bangladesh, there are reports that coordination between the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has improved considerably over the last few months. There is reportedly often daily contact between the Bureau of Livestock Services of the

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Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The Ministry of Health is involved in efforts to educate and improve the safety of field workers who are involved in culling.

FAO Supporting Additional Field Staff

¶16. (SBU) The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has responded to a request from Bangladesh's Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock to support an additional 300 locally-hired animal health workers to augment current field operations. FAO reported that 150 workers could be hired at the local level by the end of January, and the remaining 150 may be deployed in the following week. FAO said it may at some point request financial assistance from additional donors to assist the GOB in covering the costs of the expanded field operations.

Cross Border Issues

¶17. (SBU) According to our contacts, the AI outbreak in the neighboring Indian state of West Bengal reflects a regional AI outbreak pattern. FAO reported that the most likely explanation for the recent increase in outbreaks is common climatologic factors: cold weather is known to hasten the manifestation of the H5 virus, and cold weather is the only presently verifiable linkage common to the recent outbreaks in West Bengal and Bangladesh. In the case of the current H5 outbreak, genetic analysis will be able to confirm whether the same H5 strain has manifested on either side of the India-Bangladesh border. The Government of Bangladesh is preparing samples for testing and submission to an international clearinghouse for virus genetic information.

¶18. (U) Recent newspapers reports highlight efforts by Bangladesh border officials to stop the poultry trade between India and Bangladesh. Other media report disinfection procedures being conducted on vehicles crossing the border from India.

USG Activities

¶ 9. (SBU) On January 27, we delivered 10,000 USG-funded Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) units to the GOB. These PPEs were commercially procured by the Embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation. Through USAID's contacts, post is monitoring the overall response efforts within the Ministries of Fisheries and Livestock, and Health and Family Welfare. We continue to maintain contact with relevant counterparts at the FAO, and WHO. Currently, a USAID-funded consultant (TDY) is on the ground working with a large commercial poultry operation to improve biosecurity measures, and to conduct commercially-focused AI awareness training. Within the next few weeks, our permanent AI team will be augmented by Dr. Zandra Andr, a USAID public-health / veterinary sciences-trained AI expert. Based on prior TDY trips to Bangladesh, Dr. Andr already has developed close working relationships within the GOB. Prior to Dr. Andr's arrival, Post anticipates receiving some TDY support from an AI expert based at Embassy Bangkok, who will assist the Mission in providing much-needed support to the Government of Bangladesh's Department of Livestock Services.

¶ 10. (U) A meeting of the donor sub-group on Avian Influenza and agriculture is scheduled for February 7. USAID is working closely with the FAO and other donors to ensure that response is unified. More than a year ago USAID provided \$850,000 to FAO Bangladesh to enable it to respond to the AI threat and to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh in the areas of surveillance, epidemiology, communication and laboratory activities. In addition, in support of the Department of Livestock Services, USAID has funded

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training on culling and decontamination and is presently funding outbreak management training at the national, district and local levels.